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FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4790  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE 1290  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0673  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1376  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0365  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2189  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2517  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFAAA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC 0851  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 0767  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
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UNCLAS ASTANA 000380

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: ALMATY NOTES, FEBRUARY 17 - 27

¶1. The "Almaty Notes" series from U.S. Office Almaty focuses on developments in civil society, the media, and the opposition in Kazakhstan's "southern capital."

#### OPPOSITION PARTIES CRITICIZE THE ELECTION LAW

¶2. On February 18, four opposition parties -- Azat, the National Social Democratic Party (OSDP), Alga and the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK) -- issued a joint statement criticizing the recently-amended election law, claiming that it is a step backwards from democratic norms. Communist Party leader Serikbolsyn Abdildin said that the new legislation would clear the path for "further usurpation of power" and limitations on the rights and freedoms of the citizenry. He predicted that only President Nazarbayev's Nur Otan party and other pro-presidential parties will be able to get into parliament under the amended law. Alga head Vladimir Kozlov argued that the law "nullified" the development of political parties and democratization and was aimed primarily at placating the international community.

#### DOLSHIKI AGAIN PICKET THE AKIM'S OFFICE

¶3. On February 16, several dozen Almaty "dolshiki" -- i.e., individuals who paid money upfront for apartments which have not been completed -- picketed the office of the Almaty Akim (mayor) demanding their apartments. The picket was a reaction to a statement by the Akim's press spokesman, Sergey Kuyanov, who claimed on February 14 that individuals who made contracts with the Verniy construction company would not receive their apartments or their investments back. In response to the picket, a Deputy Akim said Kuyanov's statement was his own opinion and did not reflect the position of the Akim's office. The Akim's office subsequently released a statement reassuring Almaty residents that the city administration had the situation under control and will continue to provide legal assistance to "dolshiki" who have filed civil suits against the Verniy construction company.

#### SCIENTISTS AGAINST PRIVATIZATION OF RESEARCH

¶4. On February 17, several members of the National Academy of Sciences held a press conference to announce their opposition to the privatization of research institutions. The academicians claimed

that the government's recent reorganization of research institutions has ended in failure and has led to the "disappearance" of such research facilities as the Institute for State and Law, the Institute of Oil and Natural Salts, the Institute of State Research, the Astrophysics Institute, and the Kazakh Institute of Mineral Resources. Kazakhstan's researchers have been driven out, and research in the basic sciences has been severely crippled, claimed the scientists. The group addressed a letter to President Nazarbayev, asking him to look into the situation. The scientists also planned to hold a protest rally on February 20, but the city administration did not grant them the appropriate permit.

#### POLICE CRACK DOWN ON ILLEGAL LABOR

15. Almaty law enforcement authorities announced that since the beginning of the year, almost 3,000 foreign laborers have been apprehended, and 276 migrants have been deported. According to the head of Almaty Migration Police, Marat Kezembayev, the police have been taking tough measures against illegal foreign labor. Most of the migrants come from near-by CIS countries, specifically Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

#### CHINESE LANGUAGE AT NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

16. China's Consul General in Almaty, Sun Linjiang, opened the Confucious Institute at the Kazak National University in Almaty. The Institute will train students in the Chinese language, in accordance with a program created by the University of Lanzhou, China.

#### HOAGLAND